

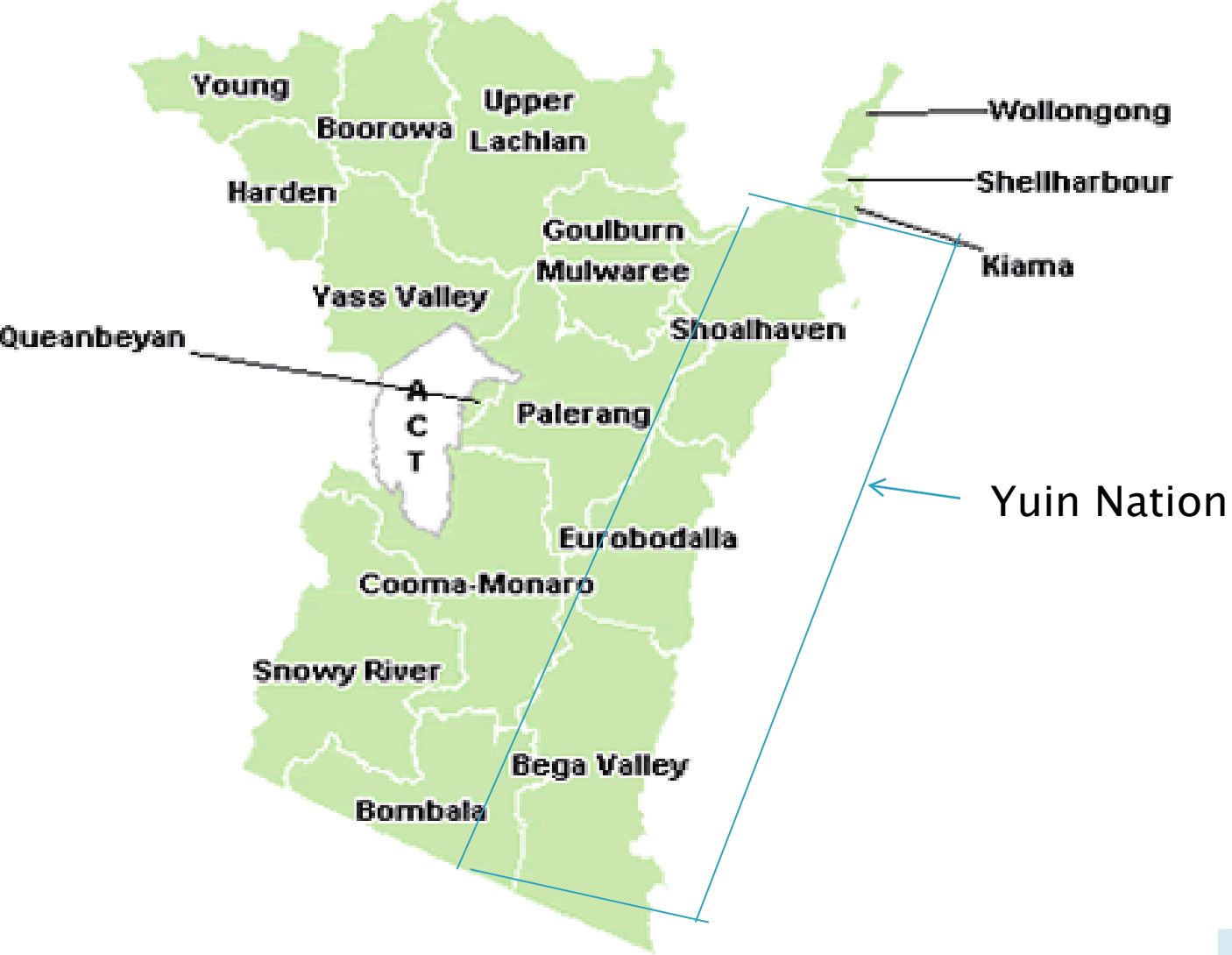


The University of Sydney

Aboriginal people with disabilities in NSW, Australia

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Research: Participation of Aboriginal people in disability services

Purpose: identify the key factors that influence the participation of Aboriginal people in disability services in Sydney.



In Context: The Australian disability services sector

- ❖ Demographics of Aboriginal people with disabilities in NSW
 - Two sources of data:
 - Australian Bureau of Statistics.
 - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.
 - The participation rate of Aboriginal people in disability services is lower than the representation of Aboriginal people in the population of people with disabilities.
 - The United Nations noted that Aboriginal communities experience the same level of disadvantage and illnesses experienced in “Third World” countries.



In Context: The Australian disability services sector

- ❖ Two National Pieces of legislation
 - Disability Services Act 1986 (around 60,000 people in NSW access)
 - Home and Community Care Act 1985 (over 200,000 people in NSW access)
- ❖ National Disability Agreement (government multilateral funding agreement) allocated around \$7 billion nationally.



Research: what the literature says

- The Government has been struggling for over twenty years to improve the cultural responsiveness of services for Aboriginal people with a disability
- Government examples during the 1980s and 1990s:
 - There are examples where Aboriginal people were forgotten as a “specialised group” in the disability services legislation.
 - Policy analysis, development and implementation is caught up in understanding cultural differences.



Research: what the literature says

- ❖ Government examples during the 2000s:
 - Aboriginal people with a disability became compartmentalised through the development of an Aboriginal Policy Unit.
 - A number of policies were released:
 - Access and equity.
 - Aboriginal policy framework
 - Aboriginal consultation policy
 - Increased reporting from funded NGOs
 - A change in the participation rate of Aboriginal people in government funded services.



Research: what the literature says

- Just like government, mainstream/generic disability services are generally struggling to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities.
- NGOs did not “compartmentalise” Aboriginal people with a disability.
- Embedding services in Aboriginal communities.
 - Moulding services to reflect the local Aboriginal community’s definition of disability.
 - Aboriginal workforce strategy to reflect “Aboriginal business”.
 - Interagency commissioning



Research: what the literature says

- There are many Aboriginal community managed home and community care services in NSW. However, there is no Aboriginal community managed disability service in Sydney.
- Aboriginal Disability Network: systemic peak/representative body.
- Aboriginal NGOs did not represent Aboriginal people with a disability as “remote”.
- Aboriginal NGOs have increased relationships between Aboriginal communities and disability and community care services resulted with increased participation.



In a nutshell

- The representation of Aboriginal people in the population of people with disabilities is significantly high.
- Focusing on cultural differences between Aboriginal communities and disability services has not worked and will not work. Accept and embrace cultural diversity within the Aboriginal population.
- Disability services must be imbedded in Aboriginal communities to improve the participation of Aboriginal people.
- The current national reforms to disability services must foster to improve relations between disability services and Aboriginal communities to empower Aboriginal people with disabilities and their families.



Thank you for your time

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National Disability Services Aboriginal resources website:

www.nds.org.au